



# Learn what to do if you pick-up a Tick.



It's time to enjoy summer. As temperatures rise and outdoor activities increase, soldiers and family members should stay aware of summer-related health concerns. While most people take precautions to prevent excessive sun exposure and heat injuries, they may not consider protecting themselves from the possibility of tick-borne diseases.

Tick-borne diseases cause a variety of signs and symptoms, including spreading rash, fever, flu-like symptoms, muscle aches, headaches and even paralysis. Death may also occur from tick-borne diseases if they are not identified and treated. However, the diseases are avoidable if the proper precautions are taken. The key to protecting yourself and your family is to be vigilant in checking yourself and your children often for ticks or signs of tick bites. Ticks attach themselves to a person's body after that person has come into direct contact with plants or the ground where the ticks are. This is usually in brushy areas, especially edges of forests and grasslands. Once on a person, a tick will crawl to an area of the body where it is protected, such as under clothing or hair. People also can get bites from ticks that their pets bring home.

Among tick-borne diseases are human Ehrlichiosis, Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever and Lyme disease. The Lone Star tick carries human Ehrlichiosis, approximately one in 10 ticks are infected. The American dog tick causes Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever, approximately 1 in 50 ticks are infected.

## ***If a tick is found attached to the body, follow these guidelines to remove it properly.***



- Grasp the tick's mouthparts against the skin, using pointed tweezers.
- Pull back slowly and steadily with firm force.
- Pull in the reverse of the direction in which the mouthparts are inserted, as you would for a splinter.
- Be patient. The central mouthpart, called the hypostome, is inserted in the skin. It is covered with sharp barbs, sometimes making removal difficult and time-consuming. Most hard ticks secrete a cement-like substance during feeding. This material helps secure their mouthparts firmly in the flesh, adding to the difficulty of removal. It is important to continue to pull steadily until the tick can be eased out of the skin.
- Do not pull back sharply, as this may tear the mouthparts from the body of the tick, leaving them embedded in the skin. If this happens, do not panic. Embedded mouthparts are comparable to having a splinter in your skin. Mouthparts alone cannot transmit disease because the infective body of the tick is no longer attached. However, to prevent the chance of secondary infection, it is best to remove them.
- Do not squeeze or crush the body of the tick because this may force infective body fluids through the mouthparts and into the wound site.
- Do not apply substances such as petroleum jelly, fingernail polish, fingernail-polish remover, repellents, pesticides or a lighted match to the tick while it is attached. The materials are either ineffective or, worse, they might agitate the tick and cause it to salivate or regurgitate infective fluid into the wound site.
- Following removal of the tick, wash the wound (and your hands) with soap and water and apply an antiseptic.
- Save the tick in a jar, vial, small plastic bag or other container for identification should you later develop disease symptoms. Preserve the tick by either adding some alcohol to the container or by keeping it in the freezer.
- Discard the tick after one month. All known tick-borne disease will generally display symptoms within this time period.

(Information obtained from the U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion and Preventive Medicine)

After walking in tick infested areas, do a careful body check for ticks, remove them with tweezers, and cleanse the skin with antiseptic.



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